

The United States, India, and Global Governance: Can They Work Together?

Two snapshots convey the flavor of India's pursuit of a larger role in global governing councils. The first dates from India's most recent accession for a two-year term to the United Nations Security Council in January 1991, just as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was coming apart and the end of the Cold War was in sight. The first major issue to come before the council was the package of resolutions that would end the first Iraq war. Harried Indian diplomats, faced with draft resolutions being pressed on them with great insistence by their U.S. counterparts, spoke of their need to "find the non-aligned consensus." Whatever decision India made was bound to alienate an international constituency it cared about. For Indian officials, this moment captured both the advantages and drawbacks of participating in the world's decisionmaking. The then-Indian ambassador to the United States, Abid Hussein, expressed considerable frustration in a private conversation with me at the time: "Do you realize that we will have to do this for two years?"

Seventeen years later, in November 2008, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and his top economic advisers attended the Group of 20 (G-20) summit on Financial Markets and the World Economy in Washington. Speaking with evident satisfaction to reporters on his flight home, he noted how serious the discussions had been, and how he and India were being taken seriously at this gathering convened to address a major global crisis. "There is one important significance of the summit. It is a clear indication that the balance of power is

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The financial crisis has presented India with an opportunity and unaccustomed demands.

increasingly shifting in favour of the emerging economies ... For the first time, there was a genuine dialogue between major developed countries and major emerging countries.”¹ He recognized that the global institutional and financial reform processes had barely begun, and foresaw India’s continuing participation in both.

The current financial crisis has presented India with the opportunity to achieve the status of a powerful and influential state in international order. On the other hand, this role places unaccustomed demands on India. During a time of dramatic improvement in relations between India and the United States, their biggest successes have been in building up bilateral ties, while multilateral settings have produced some of their most difficult encounters, notably those in the UN and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Multilateral efforts have also created some of the most effective means for the United States and India to advance interests they share. International financial cooperation is the most promising current example.

Expanded global cooperation is one of the most important ways in which the United States and India can reinvent the partnership they have begun to build. This article examines it from two perspectives: first, from the highly structured world of international organizations, and second, from the looser amalgam of institutions and nongovernmental networks that are involved in the debate on climate change. In both settings, the United States and India have a great deal at stake. Some of their interests coincide, but others clash. The challenge for both countries is how to reconcile their concepts of global leadership with their different foreign policy styles and interests.

Global Institutions: Breaking India’s Glass Ceiling?

In global institutions, the United States is the status quo power, with a privileged position in the UN and international financial institutions. The United States helped found these institutions, but discomfort with multilateral restraints on U.S. sovereign action has deep roots in U.S. politics and has sometimes limited U.S. engagement in them. India, by contrast, wants to expand its role and status. Indian policy has at times embraced great ambitions for global governance, such as Rajiv Gandhi’s proposal for global nuclear disarmament. But in other contexts, India, like the United States, mistrusts global governance and global institutions, seeing them as intrusions into its sovereign decisionmaking.

India has given clear priority to two groups of institutional forums: first, the UN, the most prestigious of global institutions, and second, the cluster of economic institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the WTO, whose work is closely linked to the economic expansion which fuels India's expanding global role. India consistently has a board member at the three international lending institutions to which it belongs, along with an impressive array of senior staff. In the World Health Organization (WHO) and other technical institutions, India's contribution is less consistent and more dependent on the personal qualities and interests of its representatives.

The United Nations

India regularly assigns top diplomats to the UN, and is involved in practically everything the organization does. Its long-term goal is a permanent seat on the Security Council. It also seeks to keep its leadership credentials in the developing country club strong, and to avoid establishing precedents or norms that India might find distasteful or costly in the future.

India has not been on the Security Council since 1992. Its activities in New York revolve around the General Assembly and the committees that include all the members. From the U.S. perspective, the voting records of most countries in recent years tell a dismal story, and India is no exception. It voted with the United States 14.7 percent of the time in 2007, compared with 18 percent for all countries. On votes the United States considered "important," India and the United States voted together 52 percent of the time, if one includes consensus votes, and zero without consensus votes. All these figures represent a significant drop since 2002. Other countries that maintain good bilateral relations with the United States, such as Egypt and Pakistan, have even lower levels of voting coincidence with the United States (6.3 and 11 percent respectively).²

Behind this pattern of voting against each other, there are signs of change. India and the United States have similar concerns on small arms trade, land mines, and cluster munitions. India's voting coincidence with the United States on disarmament issues is twice as high as it is across the board. In the General Assembly and its UN-wide committees, India is wary of attracting too much attention when its policy interests diverge from the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) consensus. Its diplomats prefer to work behind the scenes, to avoid bruising the sensibilities of their NAM partners, including countries regularly at odds with the United States such as Cuba and Sudan. Votes in the General Assembly are, in part, a way of punching the NAM ticket.

This frequent discordance in the General Assembly, however, matters relatively little to either country. Both seem to have discounted it in advance. Both countries care much more about their solid and practical collaboration on

peacekeeping operations, and for the United States, the Security Council is the key arena at the UN. India and the United States both recognize peacekeeping as a unique contribution of the UN to world peace. And both see India as an essential participant. India is one of three major contributors of personnel, together with Bangladesh and Pakistan, each contributing 8–10,000 troops and police, or 11–13 percent of the UN’s total peacekeepers. India maintains a UN peacekeeping training facility, and has sent training missions to other contributor countries. It has offered to designate one brigade for UN Standby Arrangements. Its troops are skilled, well-trained, and disciplined. Senior Indian military officers have even served as military advisers to the UN secretary-general. Furthermore, India and the United States have regular consultations on peacekeeping. India looks on its peacekeeping role with considerable pride, and sees it as an opportunity both to do good and to enhance its status.³

Multilateral settings have produced some of India’s most difficult encounters with the United States.

The big prize, of course, is India’s interest in a permanent Security Council seat. Its last serious effort took place in 2005, when India joined forces with Brazil, Germany, and Japan (collectively referred to as the “G-4”). The General Assembly resolution sponsored by the G-4 would have increased the size of the Security Council from 15 to 25, including the four sponsors and two unnamed African countries as new permanent members, at least initially

without a veto. This resolution failed to get the necessary two-thirds vote in the General Assembly, so it never went through the more difficult tests of Security Council passage and actual election of new members.⁴

Expanding the Security Council would involve changing the UN charter, and therefore requires the assent of all today’s permanent members. Three—France, Russia, and the United Kingdom—have endorsed India’s bid for membership, but none of them appears ready to move a concrete proposal forward. China views India as a competitor and so is opposed for practical purposes. The United States thus far has supported only Japan’s interest in a permanent seat. It is not actively opposed to India’s, but has little interest in a larger council. Any proposal to expand the Security Council attracts opposition from regional rivals (in India’s case, primarily Pakistan) or from countries more interested in advancing their own claim. Recognizing that the moment was not propitious for a permanent seat, India began campaigning in 2008 for a non-permanent seat that is scheduled to open up in 2011. The start of its campaign coincided roughly with the election of an Indian diplomat as secretary-general of the

Commonwealth, and the techniques that worked in the Commonwealth are being brought to bear in the UN. If this succeeds, as seems likely, India's votes on a range of international issues will shape the global response but may also irritate its international partners.

The results are likely to be stressful at least as often as they are helpful to U.S.–India relations. The United States cares far more about Security Council decisions than about most General Assembly votes. On peacekeeping, India and the United States have an established cooperative relationship, though peacekeeping decisions are powerfully influenced by the politics of the particular conflicts involved. For example, India will stoutly resist any consequential UN role regarding any issue that touches Kashmir or any other issue in the fragile India-Pakistan relationship. On these issues, India's policy is decidedly realistic. On other questions, India will be looking for cover and trying to avoid a public break with China and Russia. India and the United States faced the same challenge in working together on the Security Council in 1991–1992. The intervening years may have given both countries some ideas about how to manage their different political requirements, but have not eliminated the basic tension between Indian and U.S. aims for the Security Council.

International Economic Institutions

Few of the issues being decided in the UN directly involve India's core interests. On the other hand, decisions being made by the multilateral economic institutions have a concrete impact on India. The international economic institutions, as a result, are viewed in Delhi more as an extension of India's economic policymaking than as places to pursue a vision of global governance. This is clearly the case with the WTO. India was at the heart of the dispute over agricultural trade that ultimately led to the breakdown of the Doha Round in 2008. The fundamental problem was that India saw little gain for itself in a successful Doha Round, and hence had little political incentive to compromise. Accentuating this problem, trade negotiations go to the heart of India's politics. The WTO is primarily a forum for negotiations among member countries, rather than a technical organization run by an expert secretariat. India's participation is carried out almost entirely by the commerce minister and negotiators drawn from India's civil service, rather than by Indian nationals on the international staff. From the U.S. perspective, the WTO is the most difficult setting for dealing with India.

The international financial institutions—the World Bank, IMF, and ADB—are generally less contentious. In all three, the five largest shareholders appoint a director each and the others elect directors, most of them representing more than one country, every two years. India always has a director on all three boards, representing itself and three of its smaller neighbors. Voting in all three

institutions is weighted based chiefly on the size of a country's contribution, which in turn is related to the size of its gross domestic product (GDP). As a result, India now has only 1.89 percent of the voting strength in the IMF.⁵

India's consistent, long-term presence on the board provides an opportunity to shape the policies of all three institutions over the longer term. The effectiveness of the Indian voice depends on the people appointed as executive directors. Another source of long-term influence are the Indian experts on the permanent staff of all three institutions. For example, one of India's most distinguished economists and senior officials, Montek Singh Ahluwalia, served for three years as the first director of the IMF's Independent Evaluation Office, and set the standard for the way the Fund assesses its own programs.

The World Bank and ADB are important sources of development funding, so India's representatives are responsible for bringing in resources. Due to India's size, however, official aid represents a relatively small share of its economy. Its priorities go beyond securing adequate funding to include climate change, financing adaptation strategies for clean energy generation, and avoiding excessively tight conditionality on development programs.⁶ On this last point, India has been predictably at odds with the U.S. preference for results-based assistance. But in general, India and the United States have far fewer clashes in the development banks than in the WTO.

India last approached the IMF for resources in 1991. Since then, it has tried to manage its economy so as to avoid the conditionality and limitations that go with IMF financing. India's participation in IMF deliberations has focused more on the institution's structure and global role. In recent years, the United States has been pushing for expanding the IMF's resources, sharpening its focus on exchange rate surveillance and openness to international analysis, and reforming its governance arrangements. In a speech at the Peterson Institute in Washington, D.C., David H. McCormick, then-under secretary of Treasury for foreign affairs, called for an increase in the shares of underrepresented countries and a decrease in the weight of overrepresented ones.⁷ In practice, this means expanding the vote share and role of India and other emerging markets, while reducing those of the European countries. The United States was prepared to forego the quota increase that this formula would normally have provided, but would retain a share large enough to block action in the board under the fund's weighted voting system.

On most of these points, the U.S. and Indian positions are quite similar. India was slow to engage in IMF negotiations over quota realignment in 2006, but by 2008 it was fully involved. The same issue was under discussion in the World Bank, and India made clear that increasing the "voice and participation" of developing countries was a priority. India's finance minister made a point of calling for the fund to play a more vigorous role in responding to the global

financial crisis as well as the spike in food and fuel prices during the summer of 2008, including expanding its financing capacity and updating its financial toolkit.⁸

Some of the most important international economic forums do not include India. Although it is the world's second fastest growing energy market, India is not a member of the premier energy consumer countries' group, the International Energy Agency (IEA), created as an offshoot of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which consists of industrialized countries but has expanded its membership in the past few years to add South Korea and Mexico. In 2006, India was invited, along with China and three other developing countries, to participate in an "enhanced engagement" process as a way of assessing whether eventual membership would be desirable. As part of this process, India has been an active participant in six OECD bodies and attended the 2008 ministerial meeting. The United States has encouraged this process, and has suggested that India should seriously consider moving toward full membership.

India's experience with the OECD has been positive thus far. For India to join the OECD under present rules, it would need to be willing to join the world's premier developed-country "club." This would pit India's interest in being seen as a great power against its identity as a leader of the world's poor countries. Beyond that, OECD members are expected to abide by some 160 OECD codes of conduct on the management of a market economy. Especially important among these are rules governing private investment. While India has made major changes toward market-oriented policies, it is not ready yet for the full OECD list.

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The IEA would be of greater immediate interest. The United States has been exploring some arrangement that might make full IEA participation possible without OECD membership. The benefits to the global energy dialogue are obvious. Such an arrangement would also change the quality of India's policy dialogue with the United States and other OECD members. The major obstacles to changing the membership structure of either the OECD or the IEA are both organizations' traditionally dominant European members, who are not keen to see their influence diluted.

India is not a member of the Group of Eight (G-8) major economies, but its participation in their annual summit meetings has become one of the high points on the Indian prime minister's travel schedule and a constructive international engagement. The G-8 started in the 1970s as an informal annual gathering of heads of state or government, with the smallest possible circle of advisers in

attendance, to review the global economy. Over the years, the size of national delegations has grown, and the agenda has expanded to include political issues. Russia was invited to join after the Soviet Union broke apart. While the G-8 does not have its own headquarters or staff like other international organizations, it has become institutionalized to a large extent.

India is one of five countries, together with China, Brazil, South Africa, and Mexico, whose leaders have been guests at the G-8 every year since 2005. G-8 deliberations take place behind closed doors, and by tradition relatively few details leak out. The participation of India and the other guests has avoided the controversy that dogs deliberations at the UN. From the U.S. perspective, this is a huge plus. For India, joining this type of leadership dialogue on the international economy is a big attraction. India is very conscious of its current junior status, but is evidently prepared to begin that way in the hope of eventually expanding that role.

After the 2007 G-8 meeting in Heiligendamm, Germany, the group established a two-year dialogue including its eight members and the five “outreach countries.” The dialogue focused on major themes that affect the global economy including innovation, investment, development assistance, and energy efficiency. This format was apparently intended to make the “outreach countries” integral to the discussion, with the possibility that the two groups might merge at some point in the future. India has been an active participant in this process, providing the co-chairs for two groups, on innovation (with France) and energy efficiency (with Canada).⁹

With the world in the grip of a financial crisis, President George W. Bush invited the leaders of twenty countries to Washington in November 2008. With this gathering, the slow process described above—moving gradually to expand emerging markets’ voice in the international lending institutions and thinking about bringing the larger ones into other economic fora—seems to have accelerated. The G-20 is an informal group, initially created in 1999 to bring together finance ministers and central bank governors, roughly half from industrialized and half from emerging market countries, without the structured voting or secretariat that one finds in formal institutions. The group had met from time to time over the preceding decade, but never at the head of government level. The Washington meeting catapulted it to higher international importance. It subsequently met again in London in April 2009 and is emerging as the principal mechanism for coordinating international responses to the financial crisis.

India fielded a team that was exceptionally expert on the subject at hand, starting with Singh. In contrast to the listening brief India’s representatives have generally carried at the G-8, Singh made a substantive intervention at the G-20. He urged stronger surveillance of the global financial system by the IMF and a

renewed call for inclusiveness. He called for expanding the voice of emerging market countries in the IMF, and also for bringing emerging markets into the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision and the Financial Stability Forum (FSF), two associations of regulators and central bankers from over 20 industrialized countries that have a low public profile.¹⁰

Informal groups provide a constructive setting for India to address global issues.

The official reactions of both countries to the G-20 meeting expressed considerable satisfaction at the quality and results of the meeting. The communiqué was primarily an expression of principles, but it included a number of action items, and the key points in Singh's intervention were reflected in it. It was a constructive first step toward coordinating international policies and creating more effective means for eventual collective action.

Beyond these high-profile fora, India and the United States will also work together in a host of other institutions and on many other issues. For example, WHO, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the public-private partnership of the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and universities in both countries will shape the international health environment. Technical organizations such as the World Meteorological Organization, the International Telecommunications Union, the World Postal Union, and the World Intellectual Property Organization are standard-setters in their particular sphere; the list goes on. Each of these groups provides an opportunity for India to showcase its talents. Especially in the case of the health organizations, India has a chance to position itself as a country that is helping poorer and less capable countries to live a better life.

The conventional wisdom is that the United States and India can work together bilaterally, but not multilaterally. The reality is more encouraging. Indian involvement in some informal multilateral organizations has worked well, both from India's perspective and from that of the United States. This suggests that U.S. efforts to adapt the membership and governance of most of the major international economic institutions to the world's changing economic structure are wise. The process has moved slowly in formal institutions, complicated by the fact that there is one region of the world—Europe—whose influence stands to suffer disproportionately if India joins the leadership groups.

This adjustment process needs to accelerate. India is sure to seek a more important role in the major organizations discussed here. There will undoubtedly be a push in the next decade to challenge the monopoly the United States and Western Europe now have on the top positions at the World Bank and the IMF. At some point, India will field a candidate for one of those jobs. India's

willingness to put more resources into the international institutions may be an essential ingredient in such an effort. If India's economy remains strong, it may decide to increase its quota in the IMF and gain a larger share of the weighted voting. The recent statement by Montek Ahluwalia, chairman of India's Planning Commission, that India would in principle be willing to buy \$10 billion worth of IMF bonds, should the fund decide to issue them, is an indication that India may be edging closer to this view.¹¹ How a larger Indian role affects the U.S.-India partnership depends on how India decides to use it.

Lessons Learned

In the G-8, G-20, and OECD committees, India and the United States have joined in debates on some of the world's most difficult issues, with a degree of candor and without acrimony. Part of the reason for this success, as contrasted with the UN and the WTO, has to do with the style and format of the fora themselves. Most of these gatherings explore ideas or enunciate principles, and few make binding decisions. They are relatively small groups whose deliberations take place behind closed doors. Developed and developing countries are both present, but not in a structure that casts them as blocs. The issues they deal with do not have the same political resonance as, for example, trade negotiations. The relatively small size of the organizations is important in another respect: India's participation marks it as an insider whose views are important. Especially at a time of financial crisis, participating in creating what is sometimes billed as the "next Bretton Woods" is a responsibility that seems to have brought out the most constructive side of India's leaders.

In looking for a future model for U.S.-India interaction on issues of global concern, these characteristics are worth replicating. They do not eliminate differences of national interest. Nor do they provide a mechanism for bringing private financial institutions or businesses into the discussion, a step that will eventually be essential since private financial flows generally dwarf those provided by governments and international organizations. Informal groups cannot replace actions that need to be taken by formal institutions, whose membership structures still need to be updated, but this type of gathering provides a constructive setting to address global issues. These groups also have a track record of solid cooperation, without triggering the emotive responses which have so often discouraged U.S.-India interaction on the international scene.

Climate Change: Long Term Benefits, Short Term Costs

In the UN and international economic institutions, India and the United States are working as members of institutions with a wide range of concerns. As international interest groups continue to get better at using the extraordinary

communications capacity of the Internet, a growing number of issues may be handled in a less linear, messier fashion, with the formal processes of international organizations coexisting and competing with dramatic public campaigns and domestic political lobbying. Climate change is a good example of how India and the United States operate in this more free-form model for global decisionmaking, which their governments cannot control.

In recent years, India and the United States have participated in several international fora which address climate change, including the 13th Conference of Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Bali in December 2007. They have taken different positions, especially on the actions expected of developing and developed countries to address the problem. But their differences have caused barely a ripple on the surface of U.S.–India relations. Fundamentally, both have been trying to avoid binding commitments. The Obama administration takes climate change more seriously, however, and this could set the stage for a high-octane disagreement between the two governments, requiring new creativity and flexibility. In both countries, the debate will take place outside as well as inside government, with civil society organizations generally pushing for a more aggressive policy and businesses resisting environmental constraints or commitments.

Climate change poses a real danger to India. International and Indian government analysts argue that over the next century, if current trends continue, India may face a surface temperature rise of 2.5–4 degrees Celsius, losses of wheat and rice production of 30–40 percent, short-term flooding as well as long-term water shortages from melting Himalayan glaciers, and expanding malaria transmission. These results feed directly into some of the country's security managers' biggest concerns, such as population movements and disputes over basic resources with India's equally desperate neighbors. To curb carbon emissions, India would need to make major changes in its energy strategy, with a substantial cost to short-term GDP growth.¹² The Indian government has established air pollution standards, which have eventually been enforced by the courts, but the controversy surrounding these and the difficulty enforcing them are predictable. In the long term, the National Action Plan on Climate Change looks to energy diversification, efficiency, conservation, and other complex systemic remedies.

There could be a high-octane disagreement between the Obama administration and India on climate change.

Against this background of slow-moving and difficult policy change, India has actively participated in the international debate on climate change. Besides the UNFCCC, India has signed several international agreements, including the Kyoto Protocol. Climate change has been a major theme at G-8 meetings, the 2007 East Asian Summit, and a July 2008 meeting of the environment ministers of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The prime minister appointed India's just-retired top diplomat, former foreign secretary Shyam Saran, as his special envoy on climate change. Both Saran and the Minister of science and technology, Kapil Sibal, have made it a frequent theme in their public discussions, domestically and internationally.

In all these fora, India argues that responding to climate change is vital for the future of the world, but is primarily the responsibility of the developed countries. India above all resists any binding commitments on reduction of greenhouse gases. It argues that India had little part in the cumulative impact of carbon emissions over the past 200 years. Its per capita emissions are tiny compared to the developed countries (1.5 tons per year in 2000, or 6 percent of U.S. levels).¹³

What do the United States and India want to achieve on the global scene?

The Indian government has tried to show a more general willingness to participate in international efforts to prevent climate change through broad undertakings, such as Singh's 2007 pledge that India's per capita greenhouse gas emissions will never exceed those of the developed countries.¹⁴ Underlying India's position is a key watchword drawn from the UNFCCC and other international agreements: "common but

differentiated responsibilities," or a distinct set of responsibilities for India compared to the richer countries.

The United States faces the political reality that an international agreement in which countries as large as India and China undertake no obligations will have great trouble getting assent in the U.S. Congress. It is also concerned that a system in which developing countries are free of environmental requirements will encourage investment flight and job loss. The absence of any binding commitment for the developing, or "non-Annex I," countries in the Kyoto Protocol was the principal reason that it was so spectacularly unpopular in the U.S. Congress, even under the Clinton administration, which actively sought international agreement on climate change.

The road map agreed to at the Bali Conference of the UNFCCC sets forth general principles to guide the negotiation of environmental "rules of the road" following the end of the Kyoto convention in 2012. It calls for "enhanced national/international action on mitigation of climate change," including

“consideration of measurable and verifiable commitments” and “nationally appropriate mitigation actions” by developing countries. It also calls for enhanced action on adaptation to those aspects of climate change that can no longer be prevented, for technology transfer, and for appropriate financing mechanisms.¹⁵ This decision tiptoes up to the edge of international action, but the actual negotiation remains to be done.

The Obama administration has put climate change back on the U.S. map but faces the same skepticism as its predecessors did in the U.S. Congress. The likely result is U.S.–India friction. Trends in greenhouse gas emissions will intensify it. China has now passed the United States as the world’s largest national source of greenhouse gas emissions, and emissions of carbon dioxide are growing more than twice as fast in China and India as in the United States.¹⁶ Regardless of the enormous disparity between per capita emissions levels in India as well as China and those in the United States, this means that the U.S. government politically will need to show that China and India are becoming part of the solution.

As the international debate has focused on setting ground rules for national control of emissions, the major multilateral institutions have paid somewhat less attention to the techniques that could be used to facilitate adopting practical strategies for controlling greenhouse gases. There have been general references to the need for enhanced financing, especially for developing countries, and to strengthening technical cooperation.¹⁷ The Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate has focused on studying and propagating “best practices” in different industrial sectors.¹⁸ If the United States takes a more active stance on climate change, the international debate may shift away from blanket accusations about who is neglecting the future of the planet, but will probably focus more pointedly on the resources needed to mitigate climate change.

Climate change is not simply the domain of officials and government-to-government institutions, however. National and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) play a prominent role. Two of the most prominent figures in the international debate on climate change are the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize winners, former U.S. vice president Al Gore and Dr. R. K. Pachauri, Chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and head of one of India’s most successful think tanks. Neither holds an official position, and both have been critical of their own governments. Both are forceful advocates for financing for developed countries’ green policies. Both command a ready audience at home and around the world.

Private business is also involved in the climate change debate. U.S. businesses that see emissions control as costly and burdensome have made their concerns known in the U.S. government and Congress. The same is no doubt true in India. In both countries, some major businesses advertise themselves as “green.”

How do you build a global consensus with both India and the United States as active participants?

Internationally, businesses that believe they are leaders in environmentally friendly technology are trying to use this as an advantage. Japan, for example, has been urging that international norms for emissions controls be broadened to include sectoral caps, based in part on some of their businesses' success in developing energy efficiency and emissions best practices.¹⁹

Behind the activities of civil society organizations and businesses lies public opinion, which seems more sympathetic than governments toward policies to prevent climate change. In a November 2005 survey of the Indian public, 69 percent of respondents agreed that "All countries have a responsibility to make some efforts to limit their emissions," while only 26 percent believed that "Less developed countries like India should not be expected to limit their emissions."²⁰ A 2008 poll in the United States showed large majorities of respondents from both political parties in favor of controlling emissions, and relatively few differences between respondents from different political parties over specific methods of controlling emissions.²¹

Combining all these dynamics, the India–U.S. dialogue on climate change will play out in a kind of free-for-all, with government policies on both sides being pushed by nongovernmental actors, both domestic and international, who are also players in shaping international commitments. Actions that affect climate change will also include standard-setting by private business or professional organizations, corporate policies on norms for domestic and worldwide investment, and the raucous democratic debate in both countries. This enormous list of players will sometimes help create harmony, but probably more often aggravate tensions. Nongovernment actors in both countries will be sympathetic to the Indian argument that the developed countries need to mobilize resources to address climate change, but they will also push India to take action if the resources are found. India and the United States are working toward both a partnership between governments and one between countries. On climate change, both kinds of ties will be engaged.

The complicated experience of U.S.–India cooperation in international institutions yields a few lessons that may be useful in working on climate change. It will be important to use the highly networked structure of international discussions on this issue to explore approaches that can reconcile the two countries' needs. Small, informal groups may work best for this purpose, and nongovernment forums may be especially important. The fact that NGOs are routinely present at official international meetings may make it easier for them to feed their ideas into official channels than would be the case, say, on political or

security issues. Climate-oriented NGOs may also be helpful in creating a bridge between international discussions and the internal political debate in both countries. By the same token, neither government will be able to control the internal political debate. The gap between India's desire to avoid raising the price tag for economic development and U.S. reluctance to pick up a disproportionate share of the bill or obligations will still be substantial. But if both governments are wise enough to continue building up their bilateral ties and to structure their dialogue to minimize public rancor, they should be able to make progress.

Looking Ahead

Behind all these aspects of global governance lies a bigger question: what do the United States and India want to achieve on the global scene? The United States is accustomed to the burdens of leadership and recognizes its responsibility for dealing with many global problems. India, by contrast, may understate its influence on key global issues—finance and trade, for example—and hence its responsibility for the way the world manages them. Its goals include both status and policy. At the moment, neither India nor the United States wants very strong global governance. Both are sometimes more concerned about avoiding constraints on their own behavior than about establishing global norms that place agreed-upon constraints on all participants.

Over the next decade, this may change in both countries. The financial crisis has confronted each with an urgent need for international coordination, which will inevitably lead to some level of policy restraint in the financial area. For the United States, the new administration may be more receptive to some constraints in the interest of moving toward a global environment it considers healthier. It may take a stronger position on climate change, a new look at nonproliferation, and possibly steps toward new financial architecture. As India's power grows, avoiding constraints will compete with the desire to expand its voice in the world's policymaking councils.

The United States has encouraged greater Indian participation in international economic institutions, but has been cool toward a permanent seat on the Security Council or membership in East Asia-based regional organizations. This reflects the difficult U.S.–India relationship in the UN, and perhaps also the relatively recent expansion in close ties between India and its East Asian neighbors. The argument for bringing India into Asia-wide regional institutions and positions of global leadership is compelling, however. India is too big a player to be left out of the issues the United States wants to tackle globally or regionally. In that sense, it already is a global player.

Today's challenge is to learn how to build a global consensus with both India and the United States as active participants. Serious global engagement is not

just inevitable: it is the only way for the United States and India to address global issues important to both. The smaller and more discreet the forum, the easier it will be for the United States and India to work in reasonable harmony. India's international goals will evolve as India's economy becomes more entwined with the world and as its regional leadership role grows. It is time, in short, to start actively adapting the system to the broader and messier power structure of today's world.

Notes

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